

Learning at Intercultural Intersections



Adolescents and Romantic Relationships in an Urban Multicultural Community

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Purpose of the Study

- * Compare URBAN, MULTICULTURAL Youths' Processes of Heterosexual Dating

WITH

An earlier study in which RURAL, MONOCULTURAL Youths' Heterosexual Processes were Outlined

(Dmytro et al., 2013, Luft, Jenkins, & Cameron, 2012)

WHY is IT IMPORTANT to STUDY URBAN Multicultural Youths' Experiences?

Intimate Relationships in the Teen Years Have Impact on the Health of Adult Relationships

Important to understand youths' experiences in a multicultural setting so we can create educational environments that address some of their needs and create safe and encouraging learning contexts

Methodology

- * Directed Content Analysis – Hsieh and Shannon, 2005
- * This Method allows us to Compare and Contrast earlier findings with New Brunswick Teens –who were relatively mono-cultural (huge majority were of Euro-Canadian ethnic origin and Caucasian Race).

Participant Group Characteristics

- * 50 adolescent boys and girls aged between 16-18 years participated in this study
(mean age = 16.38 years)

Participants are from a Vancouver High School

22% of the Participants were born outside of Canada,
most being born in Asia

Methodology-Group Characteristics

Race and/ or Ethnicity:

46% of the sample identified themselves as Asian

18% identified as South Asian

16% identified as Caucasian

4% identified as African

8% identified as Pacific Islander

4% identified as Hispanic

4% identified as Thai

Methodology-Group Discussions

- Five focused discussions facilitated by two members of the research team occurred
- With the help of a teacher collaborator, informed consent was gained for each participant
- Two of the groups were mixed gender groups, two were female-only, and one was male-only
- The discussions were recorded and transcribed with a minimum of 3 members of the research team reviewing them independently

Results: Similarities with Rural and Monocultural Findings

- * Similar to the Rural Youths, the Urban Youths also discussed their processes of being aware of and struggling with the expectations that members of the other gender placed on them in straight relationships.

Similar to the Mono-Cultural teens, the Multicultural teens also described ***resisting*** gender expectations

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Results: Wrestling with Gender Expectations

- * Boys expressed concern with a traditional view of masculinity and concern about what happens when one does not measure up:
- * « Manly men are kind of in charge more. They alienate anyone different from the stereotypes »

Results: Wrestling with Gender Expectations

Girls expressed acting with the traditional feminine roles of girls being expected to focus on their appearance:

““[girls] always need to look good... they (boys) expect that from a girl. “

Results: Wrestling with Gender Expectations -Resisting

As the focused group discussions progressed, participants also talked about some resistance to gender stereotypes/expectations:

One boy talked about his family experiences and how household tasks were divided according to strengths:

« I think it's gonna be like a fluid, doesn't matter if it's the woman has a certain role, the man has certain roles kinda like whatever their strengths... Now they like to share it equally “

Subcategories – Similarities with Rural Teens

- * There were six sub-categories that emerged from the mono-cultural teens' data
- * These same sub-categories were also found in the multicultural teens' data
- * In the interests of time I will only highlight one of these sub-category findings:

Subcategory: Making Sacrifices

- * This sub-category was about giving up something one valued for the sake of the partner in the relationship.
- * Urban youths spoke of making these sacrifices for the sake of promoting well-being in the relationship
- * Sometimes though making certain sacrifices could impact negatively on a relationship:

Subcategory: Making Sacrifices

- * One of the girls had this to say about sacrifices:
- * My friend, every single Sunday she comes to church and her significant other [says], ‘Oh, let’s hang out on Sunday or something’ and [she says], ‘No I gotta go to church.’ And [he says], ‘No just skip church and.... they start argument.’”

New Subcategory: Balancing Parental Expectations with Individuality

- * Urban students described consequences of not conforming to parental expectations and managing ways of achieving their own desires in romantic relationships.
- * This was a divergence from the Rural students, who did not speak about these concerns

New Subcategory: Balancing Parental Expectations with Individuality

- * For some students, this balancing act meant keeping a romantic relationship secret from their parents especially if it contravenes religious and/or familial expectations
- * As one boy explained:
“If your parents don’t approve [of] someone that you are in a relationship with, you might have to keep them more secretive.”

New Subcategory: Balancing Parental Expectations with Individuality

- * For others, it was a way to make an individual choice despite parental pressure and to try to “ease the parents into it”:
- * “If you truly do want to be with that person, then maybe you have to let your family get used to it because in the end you are not going to be spending every day with your parents »

New Contextual Condition: Digital and Social Media

- * In the grounded theory method, researchers code for “conditions”, which provide the structure and constraint to how actions and processes are carried out.

The researchers coded a new contextual condition that was not heard of in the Rural work: that of “Digital and Social Media”

New Contextual Condition: Digital and Social Media

- * Facebook, texting, Instagram and Twitter all influence how multi-cultural youth engage in dating
- * Participants in this study spoke of texting as a way to begin a relationship. As one girl put it, “I feel the interest starts in the real world, and then if you guys start texting, it’s kind of like, ‘now we’re texting’”.
- * The mono-cultural youth spoke of media influences but social media was very new at the time of the study

New Contextual Condition: Inter-cultural Relationships

Some Teens in this study, especially girls, described restrictions placed on them by their larger cultural groups with regard to dating someone who was not of the same ethnic group:

One girl said her parents “had their views when they came to Canada, and ‘you have to stick to your ethnic culture’, right?”

Discussion

- * What are the implications of the results you've just heard about?
- * How can we as educators support youth and their dating relationships from an inter-cultural perspective?
- * How can we facilitate healthy learning at inter-cultural intersections if we take an ETIC view about CULTURE, which refers to taking into account the many unique needs/circumstances of a person or group (Arthur & Collins, 2010)